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The Great R. R. Strike.

CURE IT BY REMOVING ITS CAUSE.

Letter from SYDNEY MYERS to Railroad Men, Strikers and Stockholders.

The shedding of human blood and the destruction of the products of human industry is always to be deeply deplored. War is a relic of barbarism, whether it be between nations, between individuals, in duel, or in the form of strikes. Wars between nations are becoming too expensive to be of long duration, and under the modern laws of war agreed upon, tacitly at least, by civilized nations, and with modern weapons, they are becoming less cruel and bloody; the duel is no longer tolerated by public opinion—which is the higher law. Strikes have in some countries been superseded by arbitration, co-operation, and industrial copartnerships. Great progress in this has been made in Great Britain, where, by the weight of social gradation, much talent is compressed into, and retained in, the "Wage Class." Great strikes, like great national wars, do still occasionally break out and rage for a short time. When examined, they will be found to be engendered by causes which are deep below the surface; so deep that the latest of a series of effects is often mistaken by the casual observer for the cause.

1877
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With regard to the present strike by railroad employes, whatever may be the differences between the parties immediately in contact, we must look deeper for the cause of the difficulty.

All classes have been long suffering from a pressure as well as a weight from above. The screw of hard times has been long bearing on all the strata that make up the social pyramid. This screw has pressed down all prices; "means of payment" have been compressed in volume during the past twelve years, and the compression of the volume of anything generally desired, as the legal tender of a country (which alone is the *ultimate* means of *payment*, as all substitutes are but promises to pay) expands the *price* or exchangeable or purchasing power thereof, and renders it more valuable to keep than to expend. So long as the contraction of volume and expansion of purchasing power continues—so long as what is called money is the most profitable thing to hold as an investment, it will be hoarded and the wheels of commerce and industry will be clogged or stopped as those of mechanical machinery are clogged and stayed when the supply of lubricating oil is deficient.

The present strike of the railroad employes probably has its cause in the circumstances above referred to. If the strike had occurred in a higher stratum of the social pyramid the cause for the strike of the railroad employes might have been removed before the effect produced by that cause reached a class who, whether from their superior intelligence, their superior courage, or habit, resist oppression rather than submit to it. The pressure of hard times was felt all through society, and it is resisted first by those who are accustomed to use muscular more commonly and more promptly than brain power for purposes of defense. Hard times could have been prevented by power of brain and will. But they who were intrusted with the management of the national finances have proved their incompetency. They have discussed the relative merits of various kinds of oil for lubricating the wheels and ways of the social machine until the supply we had has been wasted and the machinery has nearly all stopped and much of it has been so long standing idle that it has rusted out. Labor, the most valuable means for securing human well-being; labor which, if continually unused, continually runs to waste in idle unproductiveness; labor which makes a market while it supplies a market—labor lost—irrecoverably lost, is the greatest of all the losses that have been experienced during all the dark days since 1865.

But the dark days are nearly over. Salvation comes through suffering. Within the next ninety days the *cause* of the "hard times," which has rendered the railroads unable to pay their employes, as well as unable to pay their bond-holders and stockholders—will be apparent even to the average member of Congress, and Congress will

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in October, apply the remedy. Legislation will then be had for the benefit of the people of this country, and the money kings of Europe will cease, for a time at least, to write our laws in Sheffield, Manchester and Lombard street, and lobby them through our law-making bodies in the usual way. The bottom has been reached : it is not specie basis, but a *basis* of human suffering—of manhood which will no longer try to shunt off its burdens on others' shoulders—manhood, which is at bay in the last ditch and *blindly* strikes at what is *immediately* pressing upon it; the end is reached, but it is blood, not gold that flows. There may be weeks of war, all traffic and communication may be stopped. Timidity and mediocrity will endeavor to overcome physical force, with physical force *alone* more blood may be shed, which God forbid, but the end will be a treaty and peace. The railroad stockholders will join the railroad employes after finding that they have common grievances and common enemies. History is but repeating itself. Reason will prevail, not force alone.

The flower of the British army, the veterans of Waterloo and the Peninsula, were not enough to suppress the riots which England met on the contracting road to "Resumption." In 1816 to 1823 it became necessary for the British Government to call out 35,000 volunteer troops to aid the regulars in keeping in tolerable subjection the *ubiquitous* mob. [The area of England equals that of Iowa ; Scotland and Wales, Illinois, and Ireland, Indiana]. Intelligent men are not ignorant of these facts and others that are now being repeated, which are graphically described by Allison, Doubleday, Miss Martineau, and others. The British Government fought its way back to specie payments—our government is trying to do the same thing, and the people are resisting. "Let us have peace ;" not peace alone, but peace together with plenty, and prosperity. Salvation comes through (not by) suffering. How much more must this great people suffer before they shall become fit to be saved from the power of their common enemies ? Not until we shall all realize that all our interests are identical ; that justice must prevail and order must prevail. If the leaders of this strike show themselves to be as cool and just as they are determined, they will have the sympathy of all other classes, for all classes are suffering from the hard times—against which all are ready to rebel. The prime cause of all the disturbance and commotion is the mismanagement of the national finances, producing hard times. The cure is the changing that policy and making times good. Public opinion will effect this by the use of ballots ; not bullets. We need not wait for an election, the people's voice being heard. Congress, which meets in October, will reverse the financial engine, and we shall go ahead on the road of prosperity, instead of continuing to back in the direction of lower prices, lower dividends, and lower wages. SKILLED AND INTELLIGENT WORKMEN, do not let the ignorant and vicious get control. Be moderate and act only on the defensive,

and all will sympathize with you when they understand what the real trouble is. But if you permit the slothful and vicious to plunder and murder on your flanks and rear, the whole community will rise and restore order by overcoming those forces with greater ones. CALL UPON THE CIVIL AND MILITARY AUTHORITIES TO AID YOU IN SUPPRESSING DEPREDATORS AND TURBULENT PERSONS. Of all the forces in this country, public opinion is the strongest. Be sure not to get the force of public opinion organized against *you*.

SYDNEY MYERS.

CHICAGO, Sunday, July 22, 1877.

(Printed in the Morning Inter-Ocean, and Evening Post, Chicago, July 23d, 1877.)

POSTSCRIPT.

CHICAGO, July 26, 1877.

Workingmen:

The power of GOVERNMENT, when *aroused*, is greater than that of any MINOR ORGANIZATIONS WHATEVER. Its force, when brought to bear *in earnest*, is *irresistible*. If you would preserve your lives now and your LIBERTIES HEREAFTER, preserve order now, and ask the Civil and Military Authorities to *aid you* therein. Leaders of the real workmen should apply to the Mayor of their respective Cities for aid, in suppressing disorder, as soon as lawless acts are apparent, and if the Police club and pistol are not adequate, call for *grape*, for you and I had better lose our lives, if we happen to be at the wrong end of the guns, than have society dissolved.

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